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Pennsylvania Historical and
Museum Commission.
The Pennsylvania State
Archives

# The Pennsylvania State Archives

The Archives Building

PENNSYLVANIA STATE LIBRARY
DOCUMENTS SECTION

Pennsylvania Historical
And Museum Commission

# PENNSYLVANIA STATE ARCHIVES

THE Pennsylvania State Archives was established in 1903 as an administrative unit of the State Library and was combined in 1945 with the State Museum and the Pennsylvania Historical Commission to form the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The primary function of the State Archives (known as the Division of Archives and Manuscripts) is to acquire, preserve, and make available for study the permanently valuable public records of the Commonwealth, with particular attention to be given to the records of state government. In fulfilling its general responsibility for the preservation of historic documents, the State Archives also acquires and preserves private papers relevant to Pennsylvania history.

The Archives is housed in the Archives Building, located at the corner of Third and Forster Streets in Harrisburg. The complex includes staff offices and processing areas, a search room, and a twenty-one story records tower which is maintained at the proper temperature and humidity levels for conservation of records. This facility contains space for the storage of approximately sixty-nine thousand cubic feet of records.

The State Archives is open to the public for research Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Saturday, Microfilm Use Only, 9:00 a.m. through 12:00 noon, 1:00 p.m. through 4:00 p.m. except State and legal holidays. Its holdings, consisting of over fifty-five thousand cubic feet of research materials and over seventeen thousand reels of microfilm, may be used by all responsible researchers who register at the search room, and who adhere to the stated regulations pertaining to the use of the records. Photocopying services (xerographic, black-and-white or colored photocopies, photographic prints and microfilm) are available to facilitate the work of the researcher. Some records are under statutory or donor-imposed restrictions. The State Archives does not perform genealogical research.

# HOLDINGS ARCHIVES-MANUSCRIPTS

Covering the period from 1664 to the present, more than seventy record groups include records from most of the executive departments, boards, and commissions, as well as records from the legislative and judicial branches. Major record groups include Proprietary Government, 1682-1776; Department of State, 1681-1990; Supreme and Superior Courts, 1742-1986; Pennsylvania's Revolutionary Governments, 1775-1790; General Assembly, 1776-1986; Department of Forests and Waters, 1897-1971; Department of Military Affairs, 1793-1976; Justice Department, 1814-1979; Public Utility Commission, 1909-1993; Department of Education, 1854-1984; and the Department of Public Welfare, 1882-1991. Current lists of all record series in each record group are maintained and, where appropriate, individual series inventories or box listings have been prepared.

More than four hundred manuscript groups contain the records and papers of prominent individuals and families, business concerns, and numerous social, cultural, political, and military organizations relating to almost every aspect of Pennsylvania history.

# SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Archives has accessioned large quantities of non-textual records from both public and private sources. The general map collection contains more than nine hundred **maps** and panoramic views. The maps, dating from 1681 to the present, are mainly state road and turnpike, political subdivision and boundary, and military maps. The Philadelphia Commercial Museum Photograph Collection and other collections of **photographs** supplement the large photographic files originally maintained by the Departments of Commerce, Health, Highways, and Forests and Waters. Photographs from private sources include a **postcard** collection, primarily of town, building, bridge and stream, and commercial and industrial scenes. Also included among the non-textual records are a **poster** collection containing more than five hundred posters; the Oral History Collection consisting of approximately six hundred **audio recordings; motion ficture films** primarily created by State agencies; and **microfilm** and **photostat** copies of family papers, early periodicals, and business records.

# GENEALOGICAL RECORDS

Records of specific genealogical interest include passenger lists, primarily of German and Swiss arrivals at the port of Philadelphia, 1727-1808; official naturalization lists, 1740-1773; oaths of allegiance, 1777-1790; septennial census returns, 1779-1863; naturalization records of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Eastern District, 1794-1868; Western District, 1812-1867; and Southern District, 1815-1829; and records relating

to military service. Available on microfilm are certain records of all sixty-seven counties, which include wills, deeds, slave registers and tax lists. Microfilm holdings include copies of the federal population schedules for Pennsylvania, 1800-1920 (1790 being published and indexed), the 1880-1920 Soundexes and the 1870 and 1880 censuses on industry and manufacturers.

*Making hatboxes, Philadelphia, ca. 1920.*
*Philadelphia Commercial Museum Collection*

## MILITARY SERVICE RECORDS

Official records relating to service with Pennsylvania military units covering the period 1775-1945 are found among the records of the Departments of Military Affairs, Treasury, Auditor General, and State, the Office of the Comptroller General, and Pennsylvania's Revolutionary Governments. They consist primarily of muster rolls, military returns, clemency petitions, bonus files, pension records, commissions, and military accounts. A small quantity of records pertaining to military service during the Provincial period can be found among the records of the Provincial Council.

## PROVINCIAL AND REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

Records of the colonial and revolutionary governments include minutes, correspondence, and related files of the Provincial Council, 1682-1775; the Committee of Safety, 1775-1776; the Council of Safety, 1776-1777; the Supreme Executive Council, 1777-1790; and the Council of Censors, 1783-1784. Basic documents such as the Penn Charter, the Constitution of 1776, Indian deeds, and original laws are part of the records of the Department of State. Other groups include minutes and papers of the Pennsylvania Court of Admiralty, 1780-1788; Courts of Oyer and Terminer papers, 1757-1827; records of the High Court of Errors and Appeals 1780-1808; forfeited estate files, 1777-1791; minute books and files of the General Assembly, 1776-1790; minutes of the Constitutional Convention of 1776; rent rolls, 1683-1776, and quit rent books, 1741-1776, of the Land Office; and financial records inherited by the Office of the Comptroller General dating back to 1762. Most prominent of the manuscript collections are the Sequestered Baynton-Wharton-Morgan Papers, 1725-1827, and the Sequestered John Nicholson Papers, 1756-1852.

## GOVERNORS' PAPERS

Complementing the official records of state government are the papers of Pennsylvania governors, which are mainly the records of the administrations of twentieth-century chief executives. These collections consist primarily of records created during their terms of office, and, therefore, provide a large quantity of material for the study of many subjects relating to Pennsylvania government. Governors' papers prior to the administration of Daniel H. Hastings (1895-1899) are fragmentary. All governors' papers prior to the administrations of Governor Dick Thornburgh (1979-1987) are open to public inspection.

Papers of, or relating to, Pennsylvania governors filed among the records of the Department of State include executive minute books, 1790-1943; letter books; 1790-1861; and executive correspondence, 1790-1969.

## LAND RECORDS

The State Archives now holds the records of Pennsylvania's Land Office, which document the original purchases of land from the Penn Family or the Commonwealth, consisting of applications, warrants, surveys, patents and other related records. Papers relating to Donation and Depreciation Lands are available to find grants of land to soldiers of the Pennsylvania Line in the Revolution. Also on file are warrant tract maps for approximately forty-eight percent of the counties

showing the locations of original surveys within current township boundaries. A list of the maps of counties and townships completed may be obtained upon request.

## INDUSTRIAL RECORDS

Several collections provide large quantities of records relating to the early iron and coal industries in the Commonwealth. Foremost in quantity and completeness are records of the iron furnaces operated by the Coleman family of Lebanon County (Lebanon County Historical Society deposit), which include operational records of the Cornwall Ore Banks. Other large manuscript groups are the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company Collection, the Pennsylvania Coal Company Records, the Pine Grove Furnace Collection, Curtin Iron Works Papers, and the Fall Brook Coal Company Records. Correspondence of mine inspectors, 1903-1931, inspection registers, 1899-1920, accident registers, 1899-1972, and mine disaster files, 1939-1964, are included in the records of the Department of Mines and Mineral Industries.

## TRANSPORTATION

Official records relating to transportation include the internal improvements files, 1777-1902, of the Departments of State, Treasury, and Auditor General, and the Office of the Comptroller General, which consist mainly of reports, accounts, and correspondence concerning roads and turnpikes, river improvements, and bridge companies; annual reports of canal and navigation companies and railroads, 1859-1965; Board of Canal Commissioners records, 1816-1868, containing minutes, surveys, correspondence, and map books of the Pennsylvania Canal; port of Philadelphia shipping records, 1727-1956; Highway Department records which include road and turnpike maps, 1706-1873, and toll bridge company records, 1812-1961; and Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission records consisting mainly of the records of the South Pennsylvania Railroad Company, 1881-1909. Private collections include records of the Schuylkill Navigation Company, Union Canal Company (Historical Society of Berks County deposit), Susquehanna Canal Company, Erie Lackawanna Railroad Company, Lehigh Valley Railroad Company, Fall Brook Railroad Company, Berks and Dauphin Turnpike Road Company, the Cornwall and Lebanon Railroad, Penn Central Railroad System, and the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania Collection.

*A publicity photograph relating to the steel industry. The Penn Central Collection*

## SOCIAL STUDIES

The Archives offers research opportunities for those interested in the study of ethnic and racial groups and women's history. A substantial and growing oral history collection documents the experience of miners and industrial workers in the Commonwealth. Individual collections of personal papers, organizational records, runs of foreign-language newspapers, and church anniversary histories are part of a general ethnic studies collection. Private papers relating to women and women's groups include the Pennsylvania Women's Legislative Exchange Collection; the Pennsylvania Federation of Music Clubs, Inc. Collection; the Gertrude Howard Nauman Papers, Liliane Stevens Howard Collection, Mira Lloyd Dock Papers, Orbison Family Papers, Millicent Barton Rex Collection, and the Genevieve Blatt Collection.

## SOCIAL WELFARE

Official records of the Archives reflect the concern of state government with the health and welfare of its citizens. Records of this description include minutes and related files of the State Board of (Motion Picture) Censors, 1915-1956; records of the 1972 Abortion Law Commission; charitable solicitations registration files, 1924-1987; Industrial Board minutes, 1914-1967; re-

ports on county homes and poor relief, 1917-1939; secretary's file and institutional population records of the Committee on Lunacy, 1882-1921; State mental hospital records, ca. 1817-1991; epidemic reports of the Sanitary Engineers, 1904-1919; records of the Office of the Aging, 1954-1962; assistance projects of the Bureau of Community Planning, 1958-1979; State Emergency Relief Administration records, 1932-1937; minutes of the State Board of Public Assistance, 1937-1959; records of the Eastern State Penitentiary, Western State Penitentiary, and other penal institutions, 1818-1967; clemency files 1777-1900; Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board legal files, 1937-1968; and records of the Pennsylvania State Police, 1905-1988.

More detailed information concerning the State Archives' holdings is available on the Internet at: http://www.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Historical_Museum/DAM/psa.htm

Please note that the Archives does not possess the capability to respond to E-mail reference requests. Patrons who are interested in further information need to contact the Archives at the address below.

**MAILING ADDRESS**

Pennsylvania State Archives
P.O. Box 1026
Harrisburg, PA 17108-1026
Phone: (717) 783-3281

Individuals with disabilities who need special assistance or accommodation should call the Archives in advance to discuss their needs. Persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired who wish to contact a hearing person via Text Telephone may use the PA Relay Center at 1-800-654-5984

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Tom Ridge
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